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## ENGLAND'S ABSORPTION OF EGYPT.

BY HON. FREDERIC C. PENFIELD, LATE UNITED STATES DIPLO-  
MATIC AGENT AND CONSUL-GENERAL IN EGYPT.

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THE Egyptian question is perennial. But American and English readers know only that side of it which British writers prepare for them. Egypt's side of the Egyptian question is but seldom stated in cold type. All opinion coming by way of England is so treated that the casual reader is led to believe that by some diplomatic arrangement, long forgotten by him, the ancient land of the Pharaohs had been severed from the Ottoman Empire and incorporated as an integral part of Queen Victoria's realm.

This is essentially what has been done, not by diplomatic arrangement, but by methods and devices sufficiently adroit to form a dangerous departure from recognized rules in the conduct of international affairs—the acquiring of territory and dominion therein by military “occupation.” As a scheme of national expansion it has no parallel, and by reason of its audacity the acquisition of Egypt by Great Britain attracts the attention of readers and thinkers throughout the world.

The time-honored principle, teaching that territorial extension should be accomplished by discovery, conquest, treaty, or purchase, has been thrown to the winds by England. For years she has been familiarizing herself with the advantages of getting area by simple seizure and boundary dispute. These methods, direct, and at times defensible, do not carry an iota of the stigma attaching to acquisition by the specious process called “occupation,” of which the British are the ablest exponents, if not the inventors.

In matters of international comity, it has long been supposed that the term “occupation” had a significance quite as unmis-

takable as "annexation" and "protection." "Protectorate" is the name fitting present conditions in Egypt, with acknowledged dominion to follow, if the English have their way.

It is nearly sixteen years, it will be remembered, since the revolt in Egypt, which led to the sending of a military and naval force by England to suppress Arabi Pasha and his followers, who had arrogated to themselves the government of the country. The Khedivial authority was trodden under foot, and the Khedive was a prisoner in one of his palaces, the Egyptian army having sworn fealty to the fanatical Arabi. Riot and rapine were rampant, and the situation was critical.

Then came the massacre of Europeans in Alexandria, and the subsequent bombardment, in which the French declined to take part; and consequently, in 1883, the dual control of Egyptian finances by England and France came to an end. Since that time, Egypt has been in everything but name a dependency of England, the French in the meantime trying to recover their share in its control. They have more than once asked the Sultan, the actual suzerain of Egypt, to order the English from the country, and for many years they have doggedly obstructed Great Britain's administration of affairs.

The Gladstonian government, which sent the troops and ships to Egypt, asserted that British intervention was to be made solely in the interests of humanity, and for the purpose of restoring the authority of the Khedive. These pledges were accepted in Europe in good faith.

A few hours before opening the bombardment of Alexandria, the commander of the British fleet said, in a formal communication to the Khedive :

"I deem it opportune to reaffirm to Your Highness that the government of Great Britain has no intention to effect the conquest of Egypt, nor to interfere in any way with the liberties or religion of the Egyptians; its sole object is to protect Your Highness and the Egyptian people from the rebels."

Admiral Seymour must have spoken with the authority of his government in this momentous matter, as did General Wolseley, who led the campaign on shore, when, to hasten the restoration of law and order, after the rebellion had been crushed, he said in a proclamation to the people of Egypt :

"The government of Her Majesty has sent troops into Egypt with the sole object of re-establishing the Khedive's authority."

Even that able diplomatist, Lord Dufferin, then ambassador to the Sultan, formally announced, over his signature, that England, by her interference in Egypt, was

“ . . . Seeking no territorial advantage, nor the acquisition of any exclusive privilege, nor any commercial advantage for her subjects which cannot be obtained equally for the subjects of any other nation.”

The revolt, being a half-hearted affair, was quickly suppressed. Arabi Pasha was tried in Cairo for treason, found guilty, and sentenced to death. His campaign cry of “Egypt for the Egyptians” in a way stamping him as a patriot, and the people enrolled under his banner having some show of reason for their objection to the frequent interference of foreign powers, Arabi’s sentence was promptly modified to banishment for life.

English influence was responsible for the commutation of the sentence, and Great Britain, which takes upon itself the task of policing the world, sent Arabi and his chief supporters into exile in British territory, for a crime in no sense committed against England. For usurping the Khedivial prerogative—which, plainly stated, is the right to direct the administration of Egypt—Arabi was guilty of an offence punishable by death or deportation.

The British government announced, after the crushing of Arabi, that its “army of occupation” would be withdrawn as soon as law and order could be restored, and a date was actually fixed for the departure of the troops. Her philanthropic task not being completed, in her opinion, at the end of the six months, an extension of time for another six months was made. At all events, the occupation was only to last for the brief period necessary to teach the Egyptians the easy art of self-government.

But the soldiers have never left Egypt, and have been there nearly sixteen years. When pressed for a reason why the reins of government are not restored to the Khedive, and the farce of “occupation” terminated, most Englishmen will say it is because evidence is wanting that a stable administration of the country can be had without British aid. Many other reasons are given in justification; but it is only when discussing the situation with each other that they are honest enough to admit that they have no intention of ever quitting the Nile country.

Thus the word “occupation” promises for many years to be applied to a wholesale operation in territorial expansion, entered

upon in the name of humanity ; and the right of ruling Egypt, taken from the Khedive by Arabi the rebel, and wrested from him by Great Britain, will probably never again fully reside in the family of Mehemet Ali. Military occupation, indefinitely extended, as illustrated in Egypt, amounts to annexation, except for the saving clause of a shambling pretence of upholding the Khedive.

There is now and then a spasmodic demand in the British Isles that England's hands be lifted from Egypt ; that the Tory policy of grab be reversed. Mr Gladstone declares that Britain has no right to remain in Egypt, and politicians of the Dilke, Harcourt, Courtney, Labouchere and Marriott type frequently raise their voices in condemnation of a continuance of British rule in Egypt. These men only talk when their party in Parliament is in the minority, however ; should one of them find himself a member of the government he would in all probability be as silent on the subject of the evacuation as the Sphinx itself.

Englishmen make a point of recalling that the Sultan declined to send troops to quell the Alexandrian disorders in 1882, and likewise love to point to Tunis, and assert that France is doing with that country exactly what the British are doing with Egypt. Her Egyptian policy has brought more censure upon England, perhaps, than any other movement in her external affairs during the century. By it the inherent dislike of France for England has been provoked to open hatred, and every nation in Europe has an illustration at hand whenever wishing to prove British bad faith.

Does England sufficiently profit from her retention of Egypt to warrant this defiance of public opinion, and the open hostility of such powers as France and Russia ?

Great Britain has well-nigh made an English lake of the Mediterranean ; the outlet of this lake, the Suez Canal, is the key to the whole scheme of British rule in India and the East. To control the canal, by force of arms if necessary, is the predominant reason why England remains in Egypt. It serves her purpose to have 4,500 British soldiers within a few hours' journey of the great international waterway, and a British guardship at either terminus of it. Without the absolute control of this connecting link between Occident and Orient, thirty-six million people in Great Britain could not expect long to hold in subjection four hundred millions in India, and to govern a quarter of the globe.

Monetary considerations have as much weight with an Englishman as with another. As perhaps half of Egypt's bonded debt was held in England when the occupation began, the gradual appreciation of the value of Egyptian securities has seemed to Britishers another justification for continuing their sojourn in Egypt. When they went there Egyptian credit was as low as it well could be, for Khedive Ismail had played fast and loose with national solvency from his accession to the day on which he was deposed.

English people owned bonds to the face value of \$275,000,000 in 1882, it is estimated, and these could not have been sold then for more than half that sum. "Egyptians" are now quoted at a premium of from three to six per cent., and the difference between the estimated value in 1882, and the value to-day, of England's supposed financial stake in Egypt, is the comfortable sum of \$140,000,000—sufficient to pay for the army of occupation for more than a century! This restoration of Egyptian credit has benefited all bondholders equally—French, German, Italian, Austrian and Russian, as well as English.

An incidental reason why Great Britain retains her hold upon Egypt is that the cotton crop of the Nile valley reduces more and more each year the dependence of British spindles upon the cotton-fields of the United States.

There are also several considerations of minor importance which have influenced the Egyptian policy of England. The conquest of the vast region lying south of Nubia can better be prosecuted from the north than from any other point; and geographers are agreed that whoever controls Equatorial Africa and the sources of the Nile becomes the natural holder of Egypt. Further, without Egypt firmly in hand, the ambition of British map-makers for a zone of territory stretching continuously from the Cape to Cairo, and bringing more than half the African continent under British influence, must of necessity be abandoned.

Are the people of Egypt materially benefited by English rule?

Unquestionably they are. Unpopular as it is with nearly every class in Egypt, and condemned throughout Europe, the occupation has done vast good. No fair investigator can witness the present condition of the Egyptian fellaheen, knowing what it was before the advent of the English, without conceding this. For half a dozen years Egypt has fairly bristled with prosperity.

The story of that country's emergence from practical bankruptcy, until its securities are quoted nearly as high as English consols, reads like a romance ; and there is no better example of economical progress, through administrative reform, than is presented by Egypt under British rule.

Security is assured to person and property ; slavery has been legally abolished ; official corruption is almost unknown ; forced labor for public works is no longer permitted, and native courts have now more than a semblance of justice. Hygienic matters have been so carefully looked after that the population has increased from seven to nine millions in a decade or more. Land taxes have been lowered and equalized, and are systematically collected, and scientific irrigation is so generally employed that the cultivable area has been considerably extended. Egypt was probably never so prosperous as at the present time.

The debt is being slightly reduced, and will be made less burdensome as time goes on, by the increased productiveness of the soil. Taking the present population at nine millions, the *per capita* debt of the Egyptians is close upon \$60. When it is borne in mind that the population is almost entirely agricultural, with whom the wage standard is about fifteen cents a day, it will be seen that the Nile fellah is mortgaged for generations to come, and the mortgage is held by European money-lenders who have no real interest either in him or his religion.

The present external debt is approximately \$508,000,000, and it is a popular error that it has been reduced since the coming of the English. On the contrary, it has been increased by \$40,000,000. This went to indemnify Alexandrians whose property had been destroyed at the time of the rebellion and bombardment, to defray the cost of the military campaign thirteen or fourteen years ago which resulted in the loss of the Soudan, and for certain public works deemed imperatively necessary.

By her management of affairs England has, nevertheless, so improved the conditions in Egypt that European bondholders have been satisfied to have the interest on their securities reduced from seven to three and a half and four per cent.

England possesses a capacity for conducting colonies, and rehabilitating exhausted countries, which amounts to genius. Overbearing and arrogant as the British functionary out of England often appears, he must be scrupulously honest and capable

to find a place in the perfectly organized machinery guided from London. Frenchmen say that Egypt's restoration to easy prosperity could have been better accomplished by them, and they allege that this prosperity is more apparent than real, charging that much is neglected in the desire to make a favorable showing in the yearly balance-sheet. But investigation of what France does with her own dependencies, nearly every one of which is administered at a loss, gives support to the belief that Egypt is better off under British guidance than she could be under that of France. No alien power could have done better in Egypt than Great Britain has. But readers who have that inherent respect for right which Americans possess may see scant justification for Britain's absorption of Egypt merely in her ability to do good work there.

Is England educating the Egyptians to govern themselves?

Emphatically not!

The occupation was begun in good faith, no doubt, but the British had not long weathered the first outburst of indignation over the non-fulfilment of their promise to evacuate (ingeniously addressed to no specific government or personage), when they began to trim their sails for a protracted, if not permanent, stay in Egypt. They would as soon think of giving Gibraltar back to the Spaniards as of restoring Egypt to the Egyptians, one being as necessary as the other to British aggrandizement in the East. England's desire to remain could not be better served than by making her functionaries appear essential to the well-being of Egypt; in fact, by making progress dependent upon her administrators, accountants, and irrigation experts. This she has done, and the "understudies" of these clever servants, those who could best take their places, are Englishmen. There are many hundreds of native subordinates doing the simplest routine work, who perceive the splendid results, but contribute thereto chiefly by their submissiveness. They are not being instructed sufficiently to keep Egypt from retrogressing should they find themselves in charge of affairs.

The Khedive is compelled to yield to England in choosing a ministry, even. This results in his having a partisan cabinet—made in London—about him, whose counsels must necessarily be acceptable to the British. On occasions when the Khedive has selected a minister without first securing the consent of England,



he has been promptly called to account, and menaced by a display of power in the streets of his capital by thousands of British guns and bayonets, which has not been abated until the office had been filled by an Egyptian practically named by the British government.

Obviously, this system renders any ministry a time-serving body, and it is a depressing picture of personal effacement which is presented by an Egyptian statesman in these days who must play the dual rôle of being loyal at once to his "Effendina," and to the foreign nation absorbing his country. Some of the ablest men in Egypt are kept in private life by their unwillingness to acquiesce in these conditions.

The real business of important executive departments in Cairo is directed by the under-secretaries (assistant ministers), who are English, and their utterances and plans formally receive the sanction of their Egyptian chiefs. The native minister is the visible and signatory power, but the creative and actual force is the English assistant. Everything financial is dictated by an "adviser," as is nearly everything judicial, and the "advisers" are British. Similarly, the ministry of the interior, presided over by the educated and capable Egyptian Premier, is also directed by an "adviser," translated from a very subordinate position in the British diplomatic service to this department dealing with all questions concerning the internal policy of the oldest nation in the world.

Each year sees an augmentation of the number of Britishers on the pay-roll. It is true that one Englishman can perform the work of two native clerks, but he gets the pay that would go to three. All foreigners are lavishly paid, wholly from the Egyptian exchequer. The salary of an "adviser" is about \$10,000 a year, and under-secretaries receive \$7,500.

Sixteen years is a considerable lapse of time anywhere ; in the East, where people mature early, it represents a generation. Those who were children in the year of the bombardment are now in the prime of their faculties, and England has had ample time to fit them for fair administrative work.

Uninfluenced by political motive, the schools of the American Presbyterian Mission have done a hundred-fold more for the cause of education in Egypt than has Great Britain. These schools, distributed throughout the country, are yearly elevating

hundreds of youths to a better condition, teaching them in particular the value of order and system.

Since England does but little to develop a class that may in time take the positions now filled by her own countrymen, Anglophobe critics point to that fact as confirmatory evidence of the insincerity of the statement that England ever intends the Egyptians to resume the helm of state.

An apparent failure has been the omission to introduce the English language into general use. Egypt is a polyglot country, and the incorporation of English as an "official language" might with propriety have followed the introduction of the present system of affairs. French, consequently, remains the only European language known to any extent by the educated natives; and where there is one Egyptian who knows English, forty who read and write French are to be found. Only one of the Khedive's ministers knows English, yet all six are proficient in French.

The official language of the government has been French for many years. Official publications and correspondence are in French. It is the European language of the railways and postal department. Postage stamps, railway tickets and telegraph forms, actually printed in England, express their values and conditions in French and Arabic. English employees in governmental bureaus write officially to each other in French, frequently to the confusion of the ideas intended to be expressed. An entire department, having charge of museums and the conservation of antiquities, and employing thousands of natives, is exclusively French in administration, although supported in great measure by English-speaking visitors. So long as the European language of the Egyptian official remains French, his mode of thought and action will be French also.

In Cairo and Alexandria ten or more newspapers are printed in the French language, purveying opinion bitterly hostile to the occupation. One of these, published at the capital, prints daily in displayed type a list of Great Britain's broken pledges in connection with the occupation, quoting from Blue Books and like documents such extracts as appear to prove its case. Only one English journal is published, and that is forced to print its news and editorials in French as well as English to secure remunerative publication.

All the journals printed in French are antagonistic to British rule, and being regarded by thousands as oracles, their influence is far-reaching. From their columns European opinion favorable to the anti-English cause is translated into Arabic by native journalists, and finds currency in the native papers penetrating to every village. Public measures are acrimoniously reviewed and made to appear to the native reader as added evils, and any reform introduced by England can have its merits so distorted as to be always regarded as absurd or tyrannical. This is a conspicuous reason why England's work in Egypt has never been effective with the masses.

Last May, 256 students from governmental schools presented themselves in Cairo for examination, prior to receiving diplomas. Each had to undergo examination in an European language, chosen with a view to best equipping himself for a career of usefulness. Although the British had long dominated their country, and with indications wanting that they will ever retire, only 55 of these students had acquired English; all the others, 78 per cent. of the whole, had learned French. From the time of Mehemet Ali, the sympathies of the people of Egypt have been essentially French. It has long been the policy of the French government to encourage Egyptian youths to enter their educational establishments; the matter of compensation has ever been a nominal consideration.

English has never been made an official language of the International Courts of Egypt; yet advocates can plead therein, in Italian, the principles of the Code Napoleon. Every young Egyptian aspiring to the profession of law qualifies therefor at the Cairo School of Law, maintained by the French government, and takes his degree in France. All these conditions, by which France is hourly in evidence, to the almost total effacement of England, contribute to the opinion, concrete in the minds of the natives, that the British occupation is meretricious and insincere. British trade follows the British flag—but British opinion never follows the French language.

The administrative blunder of the English in not bringing in their language with their intelligent reforms, is half responsible for the unpopularity of the occupation, whose benefits would surely be obliterated and forgotten six months after the departure of the last British functionary. This is one of the

best reasons given by Englishmen why the occupation should not be terminated, and any member of the so-called National Party in Egypt, if asked for his opinion, would assert that the omission to introduce the English language into his country was a triumph of statecraft, and not a blunder thereof. "Having no intention of going, the Britishers want an excuse, even a lame one, for remaining, and the influence of the Anglophobe press, which they purposely refrain from counteracting, creates one," the Nationalist would say. Travelers have long known that it was a part of Britain's policy in India to allow native discontent to vent itself through the local press. It relieves the Indian grumbler, and doesn't hurt the English official.

Will England ever be compelled to quit Egypt?

If the British persist in clinging to the theory of effective possession constituting a title, it may be assumed that they will never voluntarily relax their hold upon Egypt; it is more probable, even, that they would fight to retain it. England has withstood the sneers and opposition of France, and fears nothing from that country alone. Germany, while regarding England's methods in Egypt as forming a dangerous precedent, has not enough at stake to initiate any campaign in connection therewith. Italy is in spirit England's ally in more than one African enterprise; and Austria, the Sultan's nearest neighbor, chooses to keep her hands free from the Egyptian imbroglio from political motives.

When the alliance between France and Russia was mooted, the quidnuncs of Paris saw in it an immediate prospect of forcing Britain out of Egypt—this was to be France's greatest gain. But a sentimental and showy friendship between two nations—and this probably is all that binds France and Russia—is insufficient in these times to cause the stronger to take up arms for the sake of accomplishing a cherished desire of the other.

When Russia chooses to use an active hand in Egyptian affairs, it will be as a principal; and it is from the Muscovite only that England stands in any fear of having force—or diplomacy backed by force—aimed at the evacuation of the Nile country. Russia's diplomacy for three years has been as triumphant throughout the far East and Asia Minor as it has been in Constantinople; while that of Great Britain has been worse than impotent. It will never be forgotten that it was England

who inspired the Armenians with those hopes which led to the terrible massacres, and that England abandoned them to their fate. The Czar aims at becoming the dictator of things Asiatic, possibly omitting India for the present. By brilliant diplomacy Russia acquired nearly all the increment of benefit going to Japan as a result of Japan's victory over China, and her influence over Korea is well-nigh paramount, as it is also in Persia. If the Russians decide that the great transcontinental railway to Vladivostock is not going to secure to them the hoped-for control of Eastern matters, they may have something to say to England in connection with that country's ingenious policing of the Suez Canal. Russia has various means of reaching the East, it is true. But no route can offer a fraction of the advantages—commercial, political, or strategic—of the Suez Canal. That must be the favorite avenue to the East.

Were Russia to conclude that the presence in Egypt of a British armed force was inimical to her own ambition for Eastern dominion, and spoke as sharply as did the President of the United States in the Venezuelan affair, England might reluctantly readjust her foreign scheme sufficiently to allow her redcoats to leave Egypt and the Canal. It goes without saying that France would co-operate in any movement looking to the dislodgement of *perfidie Albion*.

The masterly victory of Turkish troops in the recent Greek war was a blow to Englishmen who believed that the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire was near at hand. They had already experienced a check when the Armenian disorders failed to shake the Sultan's throne, and the result of the Greco-Turkish war caused a painful awakening as to the health of the "Sick Man of Europe." A break-up of the Sultan's empire may come in time, and Egypt fall to England in the general parcelling-out of Turkish possessions. But the "Sick Man" is convalescing so rapidly, and is so watchful on the Bosphorus, that the scramble for Ottoman territory may be postponed for many years.

Is Egypt capable of self-government?

The candor prompting one who has made a long and disinterested study of Egyptian matters in the country itself to say that England has performed her self-appointed task in Egypt better than any other nation could, likewise compels one to state that Egypt is not capable of complete self-government at the present

time, for she has no class of officials trained in the higher ranges of administrative work. Certainly no other nation should ever be permitted to supplant the English as administrators or "occupiers" of Egypt.

The Khedive, far from being the stubborn and unruly youth that British newspapers are prone to represent him, is competent to guide an enlightened policy in carrying on the affairs of his country, without any European intervention. He would have at his command a group of progressive assistants like Tigrane, Boutros, Fakhry, Cherif, and Yakoub Artin, each qualified to render excellent service as an independent minister. As in times prior to the coming of the British, the Khedivial government could employ technical assistants of any nationality it chose. American military officers, before England's assumption of power, gave Egypt as good an army as it ever had. British or other engineers, having services to sell, should be as willing to labor for Egypt under a self-governing administration, as they are under a *régime* upheld by British soldiers. In this way, perhaps, good government by the Khedive might take the place of that now furnished by England, and the "running shriek of denunciation" of the army of occupation be silenced.

Egypt might, and might not, prosper under these changed conditions. But there is little likelihood of her being permitted to try the experiment, and "Egypt for the Egyptians" must remain, in all probability, a sentimental illusion.

The Khedive has the undoubted right to govern his country, at least, until it is demonstrated that he is incapable, or until his inheritance has been acquired by purchase or other arrangement based upon equity and honesty.

It is no reckless hazard, however, to predict that a dozen years hence all that portion of the Nile Valley extending from the Mediterranean to Khartoum will be British soil. If so, Arabi Pasha should be liberated from his exile in Ceylon, and hailed as one of the makers of England's proud empire.

FREDERIC COURTLAND PENFIELD.